



ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY AND COOPERATION WORKSHOP

By Dr. Kent H. Butts and Lieutenant Colonel Curtis W. Turner

The United States Army in the Pacific (USARPAC), the Department of Defense (DUSD-I&E), and the United States Army War College conducted an *Environmental Security Cooperation Workshop* in Bangkok, Thailand from July 19-22, 2004. The workshop was a follow-on activity from the, *Addressing Transnational Threats in Southeast Asia: Environmental Security and Counter Terrorism Conference* held in Manila, Republic of the Philippines (RP) in December of 2003. The objectives of the Manila conference were to promote multilateral defense and counter terrorism cooperation, to identify the best practices for prevention, mitigation, and consequence management in response to man-made and natural disasters that threaten governmental legitimacy. The Bangkok workshop was focused on multilateral cooperation in developing regional approaches to building governmental legitimacy and creating conditions inhospitable to terrorism.

The Royal Thai Army (RTA) has taken a significant role in developing technology that helps rural communities address the important issues of poverty, food security, health, and the erosion of valuable topsoil. It has undertaken this mission in areas of Thailand with limited social infrastructure and on distance border outposts. As a result of these efforts, support for the Thai government has increased dramatically and the ability of dissident groups to operate within the country has been significantly curtailed. The workshop provided a venue for sharing these techniques with the Southeast Asian countries of: Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Country delegates participated in field trips to technology research centers and military bases where the technology was being applied.

The US National Military Strategy (NMS) articulates many approaches for fighting the global war on terrorism. In addition to conducting operations against terrorist targets, the NMS articulates strategies for dealing with the soft underbelly of terrorism.

“Preventing conflict requires the capability to perform stability operations to maintain or reestablish order, promote peace and security or improve existing conditions. This will involve close coordination with other elements of the US government and multinational partners. Such actions reduce the underlying conditions that foster terrorism and the extremist ideologies that support terrorism.”

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Although the Thai government stresses that it is a stability program its environmental security program reduces the underlying conditions for terrorism by improving existing conditions and reducing the likelihood of disasters. The environmental security management model used by the RTA includes four elements: development, prevention, response, and mitigation.

The concept of prevention is based on the metaphor; if one drains the swamp there will be no more mosquitoes. Creating a program of sustainable development to alleviate poverty, addresses the issue of food security, and maintains the natural resource base on which rural communities depend, drains the swamp. By doing so, the areas of dissatisfaction with governmental stewardship are greatly reduced and the appeal of radical ideology is minimized; much the same as the war on poverty and narcotics is also war on corruption and the perception of oppression that limits economic and political development.

The development model stresses sustainability, self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and economic and social progress. In order to promote this idea the RTA has borrowed from a new theory of agriculture, Kyusei Nature Farming, and teaches practical elements of this new theory to rural farmers in areas where it conducts operations. These agricultural techniques depend upon proper farm design and efficient water resource management, planting the RTA developed Vetiver grass to arrest soil erosion, while using organic farming techniques and the low cost, effective micro-organism EM to create a chemical free, environmentally sustainable food source for plants and animals. This RTA interagency initiative is executed in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, agricultural cooperatives, and the agricultural industry.

Sustainability and ease of adoption by rural poor, conservation and the natural environment, and the production of sufficient food of high quality for the increasing populations characterize the Kyusei nature farming process. This unique form of military support to civil authority has been praised by the national government for its effectiveness in reducing poverty and creating conditions unfavorable to radical ideology. The focus of the workshop was on sharing this process with the militaries of Southeast Asia and promoting multilateral cooperation.

Multilateral Approaches To International Cooperation on Environmental Issues Working Group

During the conference, the Southeast Asian states' representatives participated in a workshop that identified areas for multilateral defense cooperation and barriers to success. The workgroup identified several issues for cooperation. They felt multilateral Environmental Security cooperation is needed in the region for several reasons:

- Environmental Security (especially the response to man-made and natural disasters) is seen as important to stability and an area for possible multilateral and bilateral military cooperation;
- Southeast Asian countries face a common and growing challenge to stability from environmental and medical threats, terrorism, and disasters (though particulars may differ from country to country);
- Militaries have strong organizational, communications, engineering, and human resources capacities, relative to civilian authorities, and could provide valuable support to civil authority in addressing these environmental threats;
- There is a growing public awareness of regional terrorist threats and the need for the military to undertake prevention, response, and consequence management missions in the area of environmental terrorism.

The Way Ahead

To achieve these actions, the participants agreed to conduct follow-on workshops and conferences to promote Military Support to Civil Authorities (MSCA) throughout the region. The purpose of the workshops is to promote multilateral defense cooperation by conducting a series of Environmental Security activities that addresses the elements of the RTA model: prevention, consequence management, and response to and mitigation of man-made and natural disasters.

- The participants will identify best practices and focus on ways to reduce vulnerability to terrorism—capacity building, multilateral regional cooperation, interoperability among the military-civilian agencies, and resource conservation. The task of preventing, preparing for, responding to, and mitigating the effects of regional disasters is enormous.

In the past, most countries rely on one organization or ministry such as Civil Defense, the military, or the Ministry of Interior to prepare for and respond to disasters. Recent disasters involving growing urban populations have shown that there must be a shift in the approach to mitigating the effects of a disaster and that disaster preparedness requires an unprecedented degree of civil-military cooperation, coordination and synchronization. Civil-military cooperation is the cornerstone of any successful regional strategy to reinforce regional stability and build a regional disaster preparedness capability.

A second follow-on activity is a proposed workshop on reef preservation and reconstitution. Indonesia has a significant reef protection and preservation program and the workshop would be conducted in Indonesia in Fiscal Year 06. Its focus would be to train regional military trainers on maritime law enforcement, boarding procedures, and support to local civil authority in preserving, reconstituting, and protecting the economically and environmentally critical coral reefs.

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U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE
Center for Strategic Leadership
650 Wright Avenue
Carlisle, PA 17103-5049
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